Volume 17 No. 5 September 2006

WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

Port Militarization Resistance

The Port and the County Prosecutor team up to perpetrate political farce and attempted extortion

by Pat Tassoni

On August 20, the first Stryker brigade soldier died in Iraq. Sargent DeRoo was previously stationed at Fort Lewis, and it was his unit's equipment which passed through Olympia during the last weeks of May this year. Eleven days of protest at the Port of Olympia attempted to stop war shipments bound for Iraq. Those protests resulted in 37 arrests. Demonstrators brought to the attention of the Port of Olympia officials, the wider community and eventually the world, the immorality and illegality of the war in Iraq. Protesters also pointed out that the Olympia community and the Port of Olympia should not be complicit in and profiting off of war crimes and a continued presence there. If the port officials had listened, Sgt. DeRoo might not have been killed, and the lives of many more soldiers and Iraqis might have been saved.

The Army contracted with the Port of Olympia for the first time in nearly two decades and began transporting war equipment into the Port, including 300 Stryker vehicles, in mid-May. The United States Naval Ship Pomeroy came into the Port on the evening of Memorial Day to deliver the equipment to Iraq. This prompted a continual protest presence at the Port and daily corner demonstrations and street marches. During the first week of direct actions, fourteen were arrested by the Olympia Police on Marine Drive for "pedestrian interference." Unfair consideration was given by the OPD to the military convoy's access to the roads over those of community members by inap-

▸ **Port** continued on page 10

What's not to love? Here they are, thirteen of the May 30 arrestees commonly known as the "Olympia 22." Until now, media images of these intrepid local heroes have largely depicted them, here and elsewhere, being pulled by the hair, dragged in handcuffs and shot in the face with pepper spray — all courtesy of local law enforcement. The Olympia 22 are: Maggie Belknap, Jeff Berryhill, Nick Bland, Dan Bolduc, Wally Cuddeford, Brendan Dunn, Katie Dunn, Jake Erwin, Rachel Graham, Sam Green, Ben Groves, Caleb Hollatz, Daniel Keesler, Lilia Lassiter, Nikki Miller, Phan Nguyen, Luke Noble, Molly Porter, Mat Slobodkin, Paul Wildey, Andrew Yankey, and Michael Yates. Photo by Pat Tassoni

Raising awareness of sexual assault in the military

Olympia activists support Suzanne Swift

by Janet Blanding

Suzanne Swift, a victim of rape and sexual harassment by her superior officers, is being forced to continue military service against her will as the army drags its heels over investigating her complaints. A group of Olympians refuse to tolerate this institutionalized abuse. They have formed an organization called the Swift Action Network and are engaged in actions to bring this issue to public attention and force the military to deal with it swiftly and openly.

According to her mother, Sara Rich, Suzanne Swift was sent to Iraq almost immediately after joining the army, where she was unable to protect herself from sexual assaults by two of her superior officers. Rich described the sexual assault suffered by her daughter as "command rape," a term which refers to situations in which a commanding officer, who has the power to put a victim in dangerous situations, uses that status to coerce sexual favors. "It's when a person has total control over your life or death in a combat zone. They can tell you to run across a minefield, and you have to comply," explains Rich. "If they coerce you or do something with you that's sexual, it's called command rape." Rich believes that this practice is condoned by the military, and says that women who are trapped in sexually coercive relationships of this nature are commonly referred to as "deployment girlfriends."

Even the Department of Defense's own sexual assault prevention materials acknowledge that deployment is a particularly risky time for sexual assault. In response to numerous reports of sexual assault in Iraq, in 2004 Donald Rumsfeld commissioned a task force to examine the how the Department of Defense responds to sexual crimes, "particularly in combat theaters." Advice to commanders on preventing sexual assault in their units, available on the US Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program website, warns officers to "consider the risk of sexual assault and conduct unit safety briefs during high-risk periods such as holidays and deployments."

Joanne Factor, who works with traumatized female veterans at the VA Hospital's Women's Trauma Unit, says many women return from Iraq with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from sexual assault, which she believes is becoming increasingly common. "We're seeing a lot more of it," says Factor, a self-defense instructor who has a long history of teaching women to fight back. Although a new sexual assault prevention and reporting program has been implemented by the Department of Defense, a violent subculture based on dehumanizing and brutalizing one's fellow human beings won't necessarily change just because a new policy is written.

According to the Department of Defense's own records, 2,374 complaints of sexual assault were filed in 2005; only 79 resulted in a court martial.

"Sexual assault," says Rachel Graham, one of the primary organizers of the Swift Action Network, is "engrained in the dehumanizing nature of the military."

The Swift Action Network maintained a constant presence outside the Fort Lewis entrance, dubbed "Camp Suzanne," for ten days. On a recent Thursday afternoon, Day Eight of Camp Suzanne's existence, a half dozen peace activists from Olympia stood near exit 119 of I5, along with a handful of women from Code Pink Seattle. Libby Compton, dressed in bright pink socks and a fluorescent pink tank top emblazoned with the words "Code Pink, Women for Peace," said she was down for the afternoon to show her support for Suzanne Swift. Miriam Calkins of Olympia also turned out to support Swift, saying, "She's trying to do a good thing in speaking up for herself. She doesn't have freedom over her own body. She can't get out of the situation at all."

The primary demand of Suzanne Swift's supporters is an immediate honorable discharge for Suzanne Swift, so that she won't have to spend five days a week in

▸ **Swift** continued on page 6

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions

Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress*, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *wip@zhonka.net* or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

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We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

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Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

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On the cover: Dr.Muhammad Ayub, whose passion is to help build bridges between various communities to promote understanding and unity, was instrumental in organizing a local Muslim outreach event in August.

See related article on page 4. Cover photo by John Harvey

WIP Schedule

Submission Deadline: September 22

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Alliance for Democracy Movie Night
Sunday, September 3, 6:00 pm
Traditions Fair Trade Cafe and Folk Art, 300 5th Ave SW, Olympia

Alliance For Democracy presents Michael Moore's The Big One, Michael Moore's documentary exposé of corporate America and its downsizing reign. Corporate power is arguably abusing our democracy. THE BIG ONE brings great thought-provoking stories that make us feel sorrow and then have us laughing. The Alliance for Democracy's South Sound Chapter presents movies on corporate power on the first Sunday of the month at Traditions. Discussion and local organizing follows the movies. Free Event — $5-$10 donation appreciated.

For more information about this event and the Alliance for Democracy, visit www.sound-democracy.org.

Books to Prisoners and the Gleaners Coalition Fundraiser Dinner

Saturday, September 9, 5:30 to 8:30pm
Fertile Ground Guest House, 311-9th Ave SE

Come celebrate the summer harvest! Join us for a candlelight dinner with live acoustic music featuring the best of our local farms and gardens to support the work of both organizations. Books to Prisoners sends quality used books free of charge to prisoners all over. Volunteers respond to individually written letters asking for specific titles and types of books by choosing from an extensive library of donated materials. The Gleaners Coalition organizes volunteers to gather food from our area's farms and gardens. Volunteers keep all the food they need and share the rest with those in need through food banks, shelters and meal programs. Dinner will offer a menu of exquisite choices including appetizers and entrees, salads and pizzas, desserts and many little treats.

For Reservations or more information contact Barry at (360) 705-2375.

Movie: The making of the Mahatma

Saturday, September 9, 3:00 pm
Capitol Theater, 416 Washington St. SE, Olympia

This one-time showing of the documentary features the early life of Gandhi and shows how he became the Mahatma and changed the world. Tickets available at the door.

Salt walk for life, love, and truth

Sunday, September 10, 1:00 pm
Beginning at the state Capitol steps, ending at the Port Plaza at around 3:00pm

This re-enactment of Gandhi's famous Salt Walk to the sea will represent a challenge to all to seek truth and take action. There will be no signs, costumes or banners ..... only community. Everyone is welcome to join in this march to show we are not powerless. Everyone! At the march's end we will make a symbolic expression of our commitment to seek the truth and work to save our planet.

For more information, contact Bernie Meyer (berniemeyer2001@yahoo.com) or Don Foran at Foranfam4@cs.com.

Movie: How to Impeach a President
Tuesday, September 19, 7 pm

Traditions Fair Trade Cafe and Folk Art, 300 5th Ave SW, Olympia
The Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney will be showing How to Impeach a President and will facilitate a discussion afterwards. This group is just beginning to get organized. They meet on Mondays from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. at the Thurston County Courthouse, Building 2, Room 230. If you are interested in more information about their actions or obtaining a petition, contact them at: impeachbush@riseup.net .
(See page 8 for related article.)

Open House Meal
From September 25 through October 25, just after sunset each evening

Islamic Center Of Olympia, 4324 20th Lane NE, Lacey

Everyone is invited every evening to sample dishes from 39 nationalities and ethnicities represented at the mosque. There is no charge for this, and folks of all faiths are encouraged to participate.
(See related article on page 4.)

Support the Olympia 22 Port Militarization Arrestees
Friday, September 22, 6 to 10pm
Fertile Ground Guest House Garden, 311-9th Ave SE
Pizza Party Fundraiser with live music
All you can eat $10-$20 sliding scale
(See related article on page 1.)

Olympia Copwatch Conference
Saturday, September 23, Noon to 9pm
Location: Call for details
Olympia Copwatch organizer Drew Hendricks will host a conference of Copwatchers. The gathering is intended for 15-30 local people to gather, share the history of police accountability issues as it stands now, network, and strategize for the future. We're not looking for agreement on a single strategy, as much as to share all of our various strategies and projects, so that we can maximize our individual effectiveness. The work can be so much easier if you know whom to ask for help. Although this event will be open to the public, it is intended as an advanced exercise; casually interested persons may be easily overwhelmed. (It's a large topic...)

Between 7-9pm, we have dinner at a restaurant to be decided by the participants.
For more information call 870-3127.

Media Conference

Saturday, October 7, 10 am to 2 pm
IBEW Hall Tacoma, 3049 S 36th St, Tacoma
Sick and Tired of Spoon-Fed Corporate Media? Trying like hell to change the world, but receiving no attention from your local media outlets? Then this is the conference for you! We'll bring together artists, activists, and media producers of all skill levels to develop all-new alternatives to the corrupted corporate media. We plan to create media in several different fields, each one working to serve the community in which we live. What should you bring: cameras, cameraphones, audio recording equipment, pens, notebooks, donations, etc.
Why: To change the world one story at a time!
The purpose of the Tahoma Progressive Media Conference is to inspire artists and activists to bring real alternative news and viewpoints to the South Sound, through informative workshops and working groups in several different fields of media.
Contact Information:
Lead Organizer – Michelle Pizzo
email: pizzo5x5@earthlink.net
Jeff Richardson
253-227-6884

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September 2005

The most hated group in America

Atheists

Scientific Method
Facts - Logic - Induction

"Attitudes toward [atheists] have not exhibited the marked increases in acceptance that has characterized views of other racial and religious minorities over the last forty years." According to a study by the University of Minnesota, atheists "are less likely to be accepted, publicly and privately, than any others from a long list of ethnic, religious, and other minority groups."

Study participants, when asked who "does not at all agree with my vision of American society", were more likely (40%) to say "atheists" than any other group. 48% say they would also disapprove if a "child wanted to marry a member of this group". And while 90% of respondents said they would vote for a qualified presidential candidate who was female, Jewish, or black, only 49% responded they would be willing to vote for a candidate without religion.

Respondents shared they consider religion necessary for people to "transcend" selfishness and to become "good". They view atheists "as self-interested individualists who are not concerned with the common good." They are considered greedy, prone to drug use, prostitution, and populating prisons. Fortunately for atheists, this viewpoint has little to do with atheists and reveals much about those who hold it.

In the study, those who were interviewed "did not refer to individuals they had encountered; they used atheists as a symbolic figure to represent their fears about problems that undermine trust and common sense of purpose." They stated the widely held belief that only religious persons can be moral and responsible citizens. This exclusion of atheists promotes "a sense of solidarity and identity by virtue of imagining an "other" who does not share the core characteristics imagined to be held by those who are legitimate participants of the moral order."

And for this purpose, who is easier to demean and harry than a very small number (3%) of unorganized individuals who just want to be left out of the Christian mythology movement.

Source: Atheists as "other": moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
We reward those who opt not to think. We condemn those who threaten our fantasies with reality. Notatyou.com — Reality Bites					**1** **2005:** Louisiana gov declared war on N.O. "looters" and orders troops to shoot to kill	**2** **2005**: Boeing workers on picket lines in WA, OR, KS after 86% approved strike vote
3 **2005:** Report reveals Feds spent $7.2 million to classify 15.6 million documents last year	**4** **2001:** WA state orders insurers to cover prescription contraceptives	**5** **2005:** Gas averages $3.20 a gallon for unleaded regular up 30% since Katrina	**6** **2005:** N.O. mayor okays forced evacuation **2005:** CA legislature okays gay marriage	**7** **2005:** Barbara Bush comments New Orleans' poor are doing better than before Katrina	**8** **2005:** Laura Bush says racist claims false; GW "cares about everyone in our country"	**9** **2005:** US begins tube-feeding six of 89 hunger striking Guantanamo detainees
10 **2005:** Pentagon has drafted first-strike policy for the use of nuclear weapons	**11** **2005:** John Roberts begins Supreme Court nomination confirmation hearings	**12** **2005:** Michael Brown resigns as head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency	**13** **2005:** John Roberts refuses to answer how he would vote on abortion and other issues	**14** **2005:** US District judge in San Francisco rules the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional	**15** **2005:** McLennan County Commissioners ban parking along roads near Bush's ranch	**16** **2005:** Hugo Chavez claims evidence of US plan called "Balboa" to invade Venezuela
17 **2005:** Nobel Prize winners ask KS schools not to treat evolution as a questionable theory	**18** **1996:** Fed report claims abuse/neglect of US youth nearly doubled from 1986 to 1993	**19** **2005:** Interior Dept's self audit of Native American accounts can find no mismanagement	**20** **2005:** Pope Benedict is said to have approved ban of homosexual men from priesthood	**21** **2005:** Report says Philadelphia Archdiocese protected sexual offenders	**22** **2001:** Bush signs $15 billion relief bill for airlines, laid off airline employees receive zip	**23** **2005:** FDA Dir. Lester Crawford resigns over sales of emergency contraceptive
24 **2005:** Hundreds of thousands protest around the US against the war in Iraq	**25** **2005:** Machinists, Boeing reach tentative contract with the health care plan unchanged	**26** **1944:** Hanford reactor begins operation **1999:** D. Quayle leaves presidential race	**27** **2005:** Michael Brown blames LA gov, N.O. mayor and GW for Katrina disaster	**28** **2005:** House majority leader Tom DeLay is indicted for campaign finance law violations	**29** **2005:** Survey finds 60% of women in Nat'l guard say they were sexually harassed, 10% raped	**30** **2005:** Fed auditors: Bush admin. broke law buying news coverage for education policies

Jesus, who is offered as the paradigm of love and compassion, threatened that nonbelievers will be thrown "into the furnace of fire" where "men will weep and gnash their teeth," just as "the weeds are gathered and burned with fire...." (Matthew 13.40-42). George H. Smith

Olympia Muslims reach out to the community

Building Bridges in a Global Village

by Muhammad Ayub

Four local Muslims presented a program Monday evening, August 22 to reach out and connect with local residents. Amnesty International (Olympia Chapter) and Olympians for Peace in the Middle East (OPME) hosted the program at the Olympia Center. The program began with a 10 minute film, *Planet of the Arabs* , which showed the vilification and demonizing of Muslims and Arabs in the movies and TV serials, usually as villains, terrorists, or stupid fall-guys. It waved the very stereotypes in front of everybody that the seminar was hoping to negate. It was an appropriate introduction, and it made the case for dispelling the misunderstandings and building bridges.

James Yusuf Yee

Dr. Therese Saliba, Middle-Eastern Studies professor from The Evergreen State College, was the MC for the event and provided some background information and demographics. The alarming increase in hate-crimes against Muslims, mosques and Arabs demonstrated that the negative portrayal in daily newspapers and news channels may have contributed to dehumanizing these people. Most Muslims in the US are citizens and are registered to vote. They contribute to society and are successful physicians, lawyers, teachers, government employees, and academics.

Captain James Yusuf Yee, former US Military Chaplain and author of the book *For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism under Fire*, spoke first about the basic teachings of Islam, the articles of faith and the 5 pillars of Islam. He discussed the various similarities between three faiths- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His talk debunked some myths like "all Arabs are Muslims and all Muslims are Arabs." The largest Muslim country in the world is Indonesia,which is in the Far East, and Arabs make up only 16 % of the total world Muslim population, whose total number is about 1.3 billion. Sometimes, troublemakers and extremists take holy verses out of context and twist their meanings. He quoted some passages which many folks in the audience seemed to think were from the Holy Quran, but which turned out to be from the Holy Bible. He made the case for individual study and clarification before believing the information from the biased media.

Imam Mohammad Joban, from the local Islamic Center of Olympia and a Washington Department of Corrections Chaplain, spoke on "Jihad, Terrorism and Islam." He defined the terms, dispelling some misunderstandings and exploding the myths. He strongly condemned extremist Muslims who kill innocent men, women and children, whatever their grievances might be. All the major Muslim organizations condemn any and all acts of violence and terror; however, there is very little media coverage given to them which results in a perception that American Muslims are not vocal enough in their condemnation of terrorism.

Imam Joban also discussed that the hostility between the Jews and Muslims is quite new – 50 years or less. They have lived side-by-side in several countries and built their synagogues and mosques near each another. He gave the example of the 800 year "Golden Age of Judaism" which was in Andalusia (present day Spain) under the Muslim Caliphate. The foreign minister and the finance minister of that Islamic State at that time were of Jewish faith.

Joban further clarified that Muslim rule in Spain came to an end in 1492 when Granada was conquered by the armies of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. In the same year, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella exiled the Jews in Spain who refused to convert. The expelled Jews were accepted by the Ottoman Empire, a haven of Islamic justice and tolerance. Ottoman Sultan Beyazid II was a devout Muslim. He welcomed the Jews who were fleeing from Spanish persecution, and granted them the freedom to practice their religion in Muslim lands. In addition, the conquest of Istanbul by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror meant freedom for Jews and heterodox Christians who had been subjected to oppression for centuries by Roman and Byzantine rulers.

Joban's message was one of tolerance, love and affection. Drawing upon several quotes from the Holy Quran, he involved the audience, having many read from his presentation into a passed microphone. All the passages revealed that organizing acts of terror against innocent people is utterly against Islam and it is unlikely that any true Muslim could ever commit such crimes. On the contrary, Muslims are responsible for stopping these people, removing "mischief on earth" and bringing peace and security to people all over the world. The barbarism known as terrorism, that is so preoccupying the world at present, is the work of ignorant and fanatical people, completely estranged from Qur'anic morality, and have absolutely nothing to do with religion. He concluded, "The solution to these people and groups who try to carry out their savagery under the mask of religion is the teaching of true Qur'anic morality. In other words, Islam and Qur'anic morality are solutions to the scourge/curse of terrorism, not supporters of it."

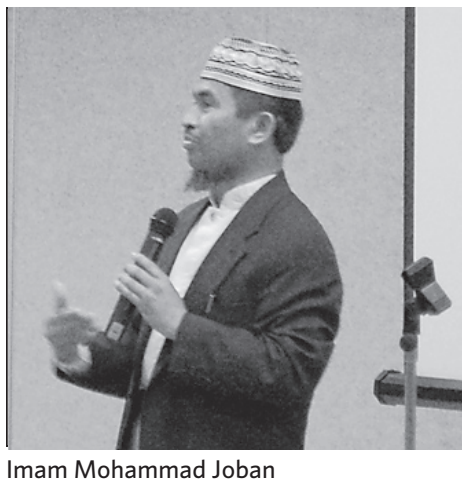
Next up was Amy Annette Winslow, an eight month resident of Thurston County transplanted from Texas. She spoke about what Islam has to offer Americans like herself, in terms of equality, justice, women's liberation, direct relationship to God without any intermediaries as well as its spiritual aspects of peace and tranquility. Seeking to eradicate the fear of the unknown that causes divisions, she illustrated the real life of a Muslim woman in America, giving her very own personal story and the details of her conversion. Furthermore, she explained that the status of women in Islam is one of the most misunderstood and incorrectly portrayed things in Western society. Calling upon people to separate religion and culture, she gave the example of Saudi Arabia where women are not allowed to drive a car. However, there is no prohibition on driving in the Holy Qur'an.

A local Muslim Women's Group distributed free information, Qurans and books.
All photos on this page by John Harvey

Calling upon people to separate religion and culture, Winslow gave the example of Saudi Arabia where women are not allowed to drive a car. However, there is no prohibition on driving in the Holy Qur'an.

Imad Ahmed, a Muslim teenager in high school, spoke about the problems that kids face in school. He gets asked about alcohol, drugs, Muslim holidays, his perspective on dating, Prom nights and such inter-cultural topics. Since the attacks of 9/11, he and his Muslim friends often find themselves trying to defend Islam from disparaging remarks, negative connotations – and they try their best to show the difference between the religion as a whole and the extremist fringe elements who are the "black sheep, giving it a bad rap." When Timothy McVeigh bombed the Oklahoma Federal Building, nobody said that a Christian Fundamentalist Terrorist had done that. When Dr. Baruch Goldstein massacred the people at a Friday prayer with a machine-gun, nobody called it an act of terrorism by a Jewish Terrorist. When the KKK bombs the abortion clinics to kill the doctors and nurses, it is denounced for the criminal act that it is without mention of their religion. What he was requesting is similar fairness and justice in reporting.

As the time flew by, it soon became time for Sunset prayers. A local boy around age 10, Walid sung the call to prayer and Muslims in the audience were invited to move to the hallway for prayers. Following this short break, the panel continued by taking some questions, which to many was the most interesting part of the evening. Attendees asked questions about environmental issues, the status of women in Islam, stereotypes, acceptance of gay converts into Islam, political issues and spiritual meanings. There was some great discussion, which could have carried on longer. The meeting ad-



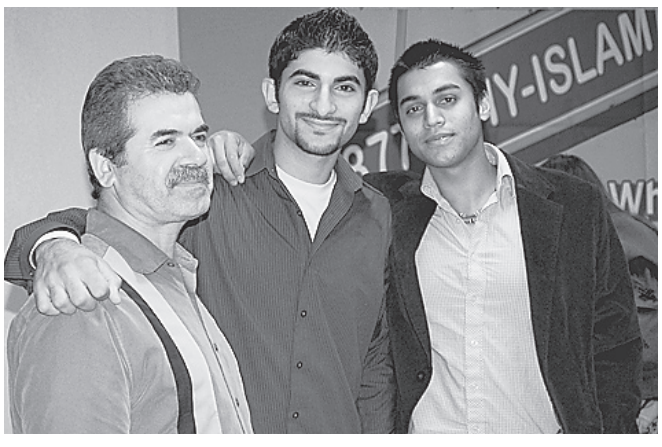
Imam Mohammad Joban

journed with a vote of thanks and an invitation to an **open house/meal during the month of Ramadan at the Islamic Center of Olympia, 4324, 20th Lane NE, Lacey, WA 98516.** Everyone is invited every evening to sample dishes from the 39 nationalities and ethnicities represented at the mosque **from September 25 through October 25, just after Sunset.** There is no charge for this, and folks of all faiths are encouraged to participate.

Socialization, networking and intermixing was the best part of the evening as people sought to make friends and develop bridges between themselves as individuals as well as local organizations and churches. Addresses and e-mails were being exchanged as Olympia Muslims hugged their community members. Promises were made to support each another in common arenas. Over 100 Quran copies were distributed along with several pamphlets, educational literature and booklets. The goal of the "Why Islam?" (www.whyislam.org , 1-877-WHY-ISLAM) outreach table, entirely handled by women from the local mosque, was not proselytization, but rather to promote understanding and to educate. The toll-free phone number was provided for folks to call in to speak to a Muslim to ask questions, request a free Quran, pamphlets, books and prayer rugs. People left with a feeling of elation, happiness, peace and harmony and complimented the organizers and sponsors.

A local Olympian in the audience, said, "I appreciate the energy with which the local Muslim community is reaching out to others here in the area and it was impressive – the attendance which your meeting drew. Of the many things that were discussed, the invitation to a Ramadan evening meal caught my attention immediately. Sounds like there is a healthy diversity in your menus with a good selection of wonderful things to eat. This seems like something that happily transcends cultural and religious divisions. Our family will take you up on the invitation to break bread together later on this fall."

[*See related announcement on page2.*]



Omar Ahmad, his son Imad Ahmad, and Kamran Rahman.

On right: Amy Annette Winslow and Therese Saliba

Lt. Watada's Challenge

"Let Humanity's Mutiny Begin!"

by Mike Ferner

VFP Convention: Lt. Ehren Watada was joined at the podium by over 50 members of Iraq Veterans Against the War.
Photo by Jeff Paterson/ThankYouLt.org

Reporting from the Veterans For Peace convention in Seattle in August, Dahr Jamail reprinted a speech by Lt. Ehren Watada, the first commissioned US Army officer to publicly refuse orders to Iraq, who stated on June 22, "As the order to take part in an illegal act is ultimately unlawful as well, I must refuse that order."

In his speech to the VFP members, Watada laid down the most critical challenge to the anti-war movement yet: Will we show soldiers that if they quit fighting this insane, criminal war and go to jail that we will provide for their families as long as necessary?

Watada's challenge should be placed on the agenda of every peace group in the land – from national coalitions to grassroots groups in every city and village. Adopt a soldier's family, plan how to do it, and announce that decision publicly to create a growing list of those ready to cease business as usual and end this war.

Following are excerpts from Lt. Watada's speech to the Veterans For Peace convention, edited only for length. Jamail reported that as the young officer began to speak, some 50 members of Iraq Veterans Against the War left their seats to stand behind him on the stage in solidarity.

Lieutenant Ehren Watada:

"We have all seen this war tear apart our country over the past three years. It seems as though nothing we've done, from vigils to protests to letters to Congress, have had any effect in persuading the powers that be...It is time for change, and the change starts with all of us. The idea is this: that to stop an illegal and unjust war, the soldiers can choose to stop fighting it.

Now it is not an easy task for the soldie, for he or she must be aware that they are being used for ill-gain. They must hold themselves responsible for individual action. They must remember duty to the Constitution and the people supersedes the ideologies of their leadership. The soldier must be willing to face ostracism by their peers, worry over the survival of their families, and of course the loss of personal freedom. They must know that resisting an authoritarian government at home is equally important to fighting a foreign aggressor on the battlefield. Finally, those wearing the uniform must know beyond any shadow of a doubt that by refusing immoral and illegal orders they will be supported by the people, not with mere words but by action.

The American soldier must rise above the socialization that tells them authority should always be obeyed without question. Rank should be respected but never blindly followed. Awareness of the history of atrocities and destruction committed in the name of America – either through direct military intervention or by proxy war – is crucial. They must realize that this is a war not out of self-defense but by choice, for profit and imperialistic domination. WMD, ties to Al Qaeda, and ties to 9/11 never existed and never will. The soldier must know that our narrowly and questionably elected officials intentionally manipulated the evidence presented to Congress, the public, and the world to make the case for war. They must know that neither Congress nor this administration has the authority to violate the prohibition against pre-emptive war – an American law that still stands today. This same administration uses us for rampant violations of time-tested laws banning torture and degradation of prisoners of war. Though the American soldier wants to do right, the illegitimacy of the occupation itself, the policies of this administration, and rules of engagement of desperate field commanders will ultimately force them to be party to war crimes. They must know some of these facts, if not all, in order to act.

The oath we take swears allegiance not to one man but to a document of principles and laws designed to protect the people. Enlisting in the military does not relinquish one's right to seek the truth – neither does it excuse one from rational thought nor the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. 'I was only following orders' is never an excuse.

The Nuremburg Trials showed America and the world that citizenry as well as soldiers have the unrelinquishable obligation to refuse complicity in war crimes perpetrated by their government. Widespread torture and inhumane treatment of detainees is a war crime. A war of aggression born through an unofficial policy of prevention is a crime against the peace. An occupation violating the very essence of international humanitarian law and sovereignty is a crime against humanity. These crimes are funded by our tax dollars. Should citizens choose to remain silent through self-imposed ignorance or choice, it makes them as culpable as the soldier in these crimes.

The American soldier is not a mercenary. He or she does not simply fight wars for payment. Indeed, the state of the American soldier is worse than that of a mercenary. For a soldier-for-hire can walk away if they are disgusted by their employer's actions. Instead, American soldiers become indentured servants whether they volunteer out of patriotism or are drafted through economic desperation.

Aside from the reality of indentured servitude, the American soldier in theory is much nobler. Soldier or officer, when we swear our oath it is first and foremost to the Constitution and its protectorate, the people. If soldiers realized this war is contrary to what the Constitution extols – if they stood up and threw their weapons down – no President could ever initiate a war of choice again. When we say, 'Against all enemies foreign and domestic,' what if elected leaders became the enemy? Whose orders do we follow? The answer is the conscience that lies in each soldier, each American, and each human being. Our duty to the Constitution is an obligation, not a choice.

The military, and especially the Army, is an institution of fraternity and close-knit camaraderie. Peer pressure exists to ensure cohesiveness, but it stamps out individualism and individual thought. The idea of brotherhood is difficult to pull away from, if the alternative is loneliness and isolation. If we want soldiers to choose the right but difficult path – they must know beyond any shadow of a doubt that they will be supported by Americans. To support the troops who resist, you must make your voices heard. If they see thousands supporting me, they will know.

> Watada laid down the most critical challenge to the antiwar movement yet: Will we show soldiers that if they quit fighting this insane, criminal war and go to jail that we will provide for their families as long as necessary?

Increasingly, more soldiers are questioning what they are being asked to do. Yet, the majority lack awareness of the truth that is buried beneath the headlines. Many more see no alternative but to obey. We must show open-minded soldiers a choice and we must give them courage to act.

Three weeks ago, Sgt. Hernandez from the 172nd Stryker Brigade was killed, leaving behind a wife and two children. In an interview, his wife said he sacrificed his life so that his family could survive. I'm sure Sgt. Hernandez cherished the camaraderie of his brothers, but given a choice, I doubt he would put himself in a position to leave his family husbandless and fatherless. Yet that's the point, you see. People like Sgt. Hernandez don't have a choice. The choices are to fight in Iraq or let your family starve. Many soldiers don't refuse this war *en masse* because, like all of us, they value their families over their own lives and perhaps their conscience. Who would willingly spend years in prison for principle and morality while denying their family sustenance?

I tell this to you because you must know that to stop this war, for the soldiers to stop fighting it, they must have the unconditional support of the people. I have seen this support with my own eyes. For me, it was a leap of faith. For other soldiers, they do not have that luxury. They must know it, and you must show it to them. Convince them that no matter how long they sit in prison, no matter how long this country takes to right itself, their families will have a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs, opportunities and education. This is a daunting task. It requires the sacrifice of all of us. Why must Canadians feed and house our fellow Americans who have chosen to do the right thing? We should be the ones taking care of our own. Are we that powerless – are we that unwilling to risk something for those who can truly end this war? How do you support the troops but not the war? By supporting those who can truly stop it; let them know that resistance to participate in an illegal war is not futile and not without a future.

I have broken no law but the code of silence and unquestioning loyalty. If I am guilty of any crime, it is that I learned too much and cared too deeply for the meaningless loss of my fellow soldiers and my fellow human beings. If I am to be punished, it should be for following the rule of law over the immoral orders of one man. If I am to be punished, it should be for not acting sooner. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, 'History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.'

I'll end with one more Martin Luther King Jr. quote: 'One who breaks an unjust law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.'

Thank you and bless you all."

Mike Ferner was a Navy Corpsman during Vietnam and is a member of Veterans For Peace, currently serving two months house arrest for spraypainting "Troops Out Now!" on a highway overpass in Toledo, Ohio. He can be reached at mike.ferner@sbcglobal.net .

Visit www.thankyoult.org for updates on Lt. Watada's case.

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Is the US anti-war movement willing to confront Israel?

by Todd Chretien

On August 12, 2006, some 25,000 people in San Francisco, Washington, DC, Los Angeles and other cities took part in protests against the Israeli/American war in the Middle East. Probably around fifty per cent of the marchers were Arab or Muslim. These protests showed the Arab world, and specifically our brothers and sisters in Lebanon and Gaza, that there is opposition to the US government's policies. That's a good start. But you have to ask the question: Why after a month of war did so few people come out to protest? Where were the "anti-war" Democratic leaders? Where were the anti-war groups such as United for Peace and Justice or MoveOn.org?

There is no need to expound on the blame the American corporate media shares in many good people's profoundly bad understanding of what is happening. However, media lies are not sufficient to explain the American anti-war movement's passivity. Deeper political explanations are required. While sixty per cent of the American population opposes the endless occupation of Iraq, the anti-war movement itself still accepts many ideas that weaken it. These ideas will not be overcome quickly, but they must be openly raised and debated.

The Right to Self-Determination

The United States dominates the Middle East. It occupies Iraq, funds Arab client states and arms Israel to the teeth. In this situation, the US and Israel governments are brutally oppressing the majority via military power and economic robbery. Basic democratic principles require Americans to oppose our government's actions and to stand squarely for the right to self-determination by the Arab people. It is not the American anti-war movement's job to lecture the people of the Middle East on how to conduct their resistance. You do not have to agree with all of Hezbollah's ideas to support their resistance to Israel. Condemning "both sides" in the Middle East is just like condemning "both sides" in the American Civil War. During the Civil War, with all its complications, one side fought for slavery and the other fought for emancipation. Today in the Middle East, one side fights to rob and pillage, the other seeks self-determination and dignity.

> It is not the American anti-war movement's job to lecture the people of the Middle East on how to conduct their resistance. You do not have to agree with all of Hezbollah's ideas to support their resistance to Israel.

Vilification of Islam

Democrats and Republicans alike have vilified Islam. Bush's latest phrase is "Islamic fascists." Too many anti-war activists have bought into the lie that Islam is a danger. The idea that Islam's ideas are more "conservative" than Christianity or Judaism is ridiculous. The media-created myth that Arabs and Muslims aren't "ready for democracy" or they "just like to kill each other" are racist to the core. Muslims and Arabs in the US bear the brunt of the "war on terror." The anti-war movement needs to shake off its Islamophobia and make sustained efforts to reach out to Arab and Muslim communities in the United States to bring them into the heart of the anti-war movement. The past month has seen the largest mobilizations of anti-war Arabs and Muslims since the Jenin massacre in Palestine in April of 2002. Building concrete solidarity – in deed, not just in words – with these forces must be a priority.

US Aid to Israel

The leader of the South African trade union COSATU recently stated that he thinks that the Palestinians face worse conditions than Blacks faced during South African Apartheid. There will never be peace in the Middle East as long as the Zionist state is given a blank check from the United States to have separate laws for Arabs and Jews and treat the Palestinian people as less than human. Israel is part of the American empire and is key to the US plans for permanent domination of the Middle East. If we ever want to see our troops come home from Iraq, then the anti-war movement must fight to cut off all American aid to Israel. This will mean a fierce debate amongst liberal organizations, unions, etc., but it is necessary and now is the best time to raise it.

Waiting for Hillary

In addition, the Democratic Party continues to exercise a profound influence on the anti-war movement. Just as in 2004, when the movement demobilized to get behind John "I'll send more troops to Iraq" Kerry, today the movement is paralyzed waiting for Hillary Clinton, or some other savior to "end the Bush regime." (This line of reasoning even leads some people to think that Al Gore or John Kerry should give it another go!) Bush is a problem, but he is not the problem. Of course, no serious anti-war person believes the Democrats will bring peace to the world; however, too many anti-war people still believe that the Democrats will bring us closer to peace. This idea has a real impact on political organizing. For instance, rather than throwing its weight behind the August 12 protests, United For Peace and Justice merely asked people to call their Congressional representatives "every day." The Peace Campaign on their website listed events from August 6 to Sept. 21 without listing August 12 mobilizations, thereby failing to identify with the thousands of Arabs and Muslims who took to the streets.

> Israel is part of the American empire and is key to the US plans for permanent domination of the Middle East. If we ever want to see our troops come home from Iraq, then the anti-war movement must fight to cut off all American aid to Israel.

What Next?

Israel still may disregard the ceasefire or simply use it as cover and expand its war. Or they may adopt a longer range plan to regroup and wait for a better moment to attack Hezbollah, perhaps by engaging Syria. They will certainly continue to exact their revenge on Gaza, while Hezbollah has emerged as the hero to millions of Arabs and Muslims. Hezbollah's fight will encourage the resistance in Iraq, and it will give a boost to opposition forces in Egypt, Jordan and other American client states. Unfortunately, the United States may become more aggressive in the face of rising opposition. Remember that after the Tet offensive in Vietnam in January 1968, the US went on to invade Cambodia and Laos. A wounded beast can be more dangerous.

Therefore the anti-war movement must prepare for a new round of mobilizations this fall and be prepared to respond to new emergencies. Three-and-a-half years after the invasion of Iraq, the anti-war movement must put itself on a new footing. We must build a movement that stands for self-determination, rejects vilification of Islam and openly embraces Arabs and Muslim forces, fights to cut ties with Israel and severs its allegiance to the Democratic Party. This will not happen overnight, but the people of Lebanon and Gaza have paid too high a price in their own blood for us to not take these lessons to heart here in the belly of the beast.

Todd Chretien is the Green Party candidate for US Senate, running against Sen. Dianne Feinstein in California. He can be reached at: ToddChretien@mac.com .

▸ **Swift** continued from page 1

a work environment that is unsafe and unsupportive. Second on the list is the retention of her medical benefits for life, to include counseling, so that her post-traumatic stress disorder can be effectively treated. The third demand is that the military hold the perpetrators of her assaults responsible, a demand her supporters acknowledge is less likely to be met, given the military's prior history of sweeping such matters under the rug.

Wally Cuddeford, a peace activist from Olympia, explains that he is devoting time to maintaining a presence at Camp Suzanne, not only to show support for Swift, but to put pressure on the military so it doesn't ignore her complaint. "She was sexually assaulted while trying to serve her country," says Cuddeford. "She filed a complaint through the official channels. The military seemed either unwilling or unable to do anything about it. We're here to make sure they know that her case and cases like it will not be tolerated by the public any more." Fort Lewis spokesman, Joseph Piek, however, reports that an army regulation 15-6 investigation into Suzanne Swift's complaint of sexual harassment is currently being conducted, stating that "a very thorough complaint procedure is in process."

Rachel Graham shares Cuddeford's beliefs about the military's evasion of responsibility for addressing this issue. "There's a real problem with prosecuting the perpetrators," says Graham. Graham explains that the epidemic of sexual harassment in the military is being largely ignored by officials, with only a miniscule percentage of allegations ultimately resulting in a court martial. According to the Department of Defense's own records, 2,374 complaints of sexual assault were filed in 2005; only 79 resulted in a court martial. Graham would like Suzanne Swift's case to be different. "The reason we're doing the camp is to call attention to the issue, because without public pressure, they won't do anything about it."

Standing at Camp Suzanne, holding a sign that directed passing motorists to an informational website, I was surprised by all the friendly honks and waves from the passersby on their way to the Fort Lewis. Camp Suzanne die-hards told me they too have been seeing an unusually positive response. "The first few days, people seemed kind of indifferent," said Wally Cuddeford, who has been present from Day One. "They seemed to think we were another anti-war protest. After a few days, the positive response really kicked in, and we're overwhelmingly supported, especially by cars coming in and out of Fort Lewis."

Graham confirms this impression. "Every once in a while we get a negative response," she says, "but overall public response has been really good. It's kind of hard to flip off an anti-rape protest."

Camp Suzanne has been discontinued, but the Swift Action Network is planning future actions in support of Suzanne and other victims of military sexual assault. For more information, email suzanneswiftaction@yahoo.com .

Camp Suzanne demonstrators make their demands clear outside of Fort Lewis at the Exit 119 overpass above I-5. (photo by Jeff Paterson)

Facing down repression in Oaxaca

Change is coming to Mexico

by Rochelle Gause

The sounds of gunshots echo through the streets of Oaxaca and bounce off the mountains that surround the city. It's 3:00 am, and the members of the movement – who are camped out in the streets, huddled under tarps, armed only with rocks and pipes – are facing these bullets from government forces. Church bells begin to ring to signify where the attack is occurring and to call for support. This movement, which began with teachers camped out in Oaxaca City's main square, has now grown to a full-fledged popular struggle including farmers, union members, street vendors and social leaders camped 24 hours at all major government buildings, road blockades, twenty rural town halls and radio stations.

On August 1 a 3000-strong women's march moved through downtown, clanging pots and pans and calling for the resignation of the state governor of Oaxaca, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. After the march ended in the main square, a contingent of 500 women decided to take over Channel 9 CORTV, a statewide television station, and its two affiliated radio stations. After a few hours the women got the channel back on the air. They began to express many reasons for the takeover: to continue the pressure for the governor's resignation, to reclaim the space for the community, to air the news that is not getting covered, and to use the mode of communication for organizing and spreading word of the needs of the movement. One woman expressed that they will not let those "...from high society intimidate us by calling us tortilleras (women who sell tortillas in the street)." Another exclaimed "it is time to wake up, time to stand up and say enough."

Community radio has been a very significant part of this mobilization, giving new voice to the voiceless. May 2005 marked the beginning of the annual strike and encampment of Section 22 of the National Union of Education Workers to call for pay raises, desks, books and breakfasts for their students. The teachers created a pirate radio station called Radio Planton that communicated the situation for the teachers encamped in the main square and much more. During the June 14 repression, now known as the "desalojo," the station was destroyed. In response, students from the Autonomous University of Benito Juarez reclaimed their radio station, Radio Universidad, and it became communication for the movement. It too was shot into by government goons, and acid was poured on the transmitter, destroying the station. On August 21, police and government goons attacked the transmitter control room for Channel 9, taking it and the two affiliated radio stations off the air. A contingency plan had been created and within hours eleven radio stations were under the control of movement members, many of them women from Channel 9.

The movement seems so strong and widespread, it feels unstoppable. However, at the same time that Governor Ulises Ruíz Ortíz speaks on mainstream news about creating a "dialogue for peace," plainclothes cops and paramilitaries appear at night and fire into the encampments. Two movement members guarding radio stations have been killed this week, bringing the total deaths to four. In response to Wednesday night's shooting, a teacher explained, "In truth after last night we are afraid, even though we don't say so. No one wants to be exposed, but we are aware that we have to go forward until this is finished. The consensus without a doubt was that we go together to the end." Arrest warrants have been issued for fifty movement "leaders," including members of the teachers union. Four have been abducted from the street by unmarked vans; photos of one, a biologist severely beaten, were seen in the local news. Last week, with one day's notice, a march against repression was held; 20,000 attended. Halfway through the march to Channel 9, government goons shot into the crowd, killing José Jimenez Colmenares, a mechanic and husband of a teacher.

The movement faces these acts of repression with resilience. I have watched two caskets carried through a sea of raised fists in the main square with thousands in attendance. The Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca, APPO – the main organizing structure made up of a coalition of the striking teachers and 150 social organisations – seems to advance daily with announcements of new actions and strategies to shut down the government of Oaxaca. On August 16 and 17 they held a forum entitled "Building Democracy and Governability in Oaxaca," with sessions covering the design of a new state constitution, creating democracy from below, and movement inclusion and respect for diversity. Oaxaca may be one of the poorest states in all of Mexico but the people are aware of why and the direct role neoliberalism plays in their lives. On August 18, APPO called for a statewide general strike and 80,000 people participated. Banks and wealthy businesses have been blockaded. APPO is organized into various committees, including security, which is currently blockading many streets and trying to protect the encampments from the nightly attacks by government forces.

> Oaxaca may be one of the poorest states in all of Mexico but the people are aware of why, and the direct role neoliberalism plays in their lives.

There are clear connections between this movement and the ongoing national battle to reclaim democracy, as the right-wing candidate, Felipe Calderón, with the help of the conservative Federal Electoral Commission, comes closer and closer to stealing the presidential election through fraud. Change is coming to Mexico, and it is the unity, organization, sacrifice, courage, creativity and perseverance found in this grassroots struggle that has the potential to end to the rampant inequality fostered by so-called free trade and the other exploitative policies that have ruled Mexico throughout history. The Former Chiapas Bishop Samuel Ruíz García, a long-time advocate for the poor and indigenous communities, attended the APPO forum. In the closing ceremonies he stated, "...it might be that we are standing in two time dimensions: the past and the future. In these days we are living something that we are leaving, and cement is being placed beneath something that doesn't come automatically but is the result of working together, of our construction."

Rochelle Gause is a former resident of Olympia and delegate of the Olympia–Rafah Sister City Project.

On August 10th, APPO (the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca) called for a march against repression. More than 20,000 people joined with one day's notice. The march was cut short when gunmen fired into the crowd, killing one, injuring three. (Photo by Rochelle Gause)

Hey Olympia, let's impeach Bush/Cheney

A group of Thurston County residents is joining thousands of citizens from across the country in calling for an impeachment investigation of President Bush and Vice President Cheney. These men have defied our nation's Constitution and violated their oaths of office to such an extent that we can no longer remain silent.

The Citizens Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney's intention is to educate the public concerning the impeachable offenses and to urge the removal of George W. Bush and Richard B. Cheney from office. They have started holding informational meetings to discuss the impeachable offenses, the impeachment process and how citizens can become involved. They have also launched a petition drive.

The group is using a documentary prepared by the Center for Constitutional Rights, *How to Impeach a President*, which focuses on four impeachable offenses. These are: 1) Justified the war in Iraq using fraudulent evidence, 2) Dismissed civil liberties and tortured prisoners, 3) Performed illegal wiretapping of citizens, 4) Refused to obey more than 750 laws by using "signing statements."

"While the list of violations of law that represent impeachable offenses is long," said Jerry Smith, a member of the group, "we have chosen these four that represent the greatest threat to our form of government. If left unchallenged, these actions would permanently alter the balance of power in ways the signers of the Constitution intended to prohibit." He stressed that impeachment is not about politics nor is it about whether people like or dislike Bush and Cheney. This is about protecting and defending the Constitution from those who would create an all-powerful executive branch.

> Citizens have the right to petition the government for redress of grievances.

The impeachment process begins with an investigation into these crimes. The House of Represenatives appoints a select committee to conduct this investigation; this non-partisan committee is comprised of ten Republicans and ten Democrats. This committee reviews each of the offenses; if they find there is sufficient evidence, the Senate conducts the equivalent of a trial to determine whether the President and Vice-President are guilty. The President and Vice President will have defense attorneys, and the Senate will appoint a prosecutor. All 100 Senators will be the jury. If guilty, they will be removed from office.

Impeachment is a remedy, not a punishment. It enables the Congress to check a President who believes he is above the law. The House has only impeached three presidents. Most recently, the House impeached Clinton but the Senate did not find him guilty. Nixon won a landslide victory in 1972 but the House impeached him because of his criminal activities associated with Watergate; he resigned from office in 1974 before the process was completed.

A citizens' impeachment movement sends a strong message to our lawmakers in Congress who have been unwilling to protect the Constitution. Citizens have the right to petition the government for redress of grievances. Cities and states also have the right to send an impeachment resolution to the House of Representatives to begin an impeachment process. A number of cities have passed impeachment resolutions; some cities and some states have impeachment resolutions pending.

There is no dispute that Bush/Cheney have committed these four offenses, the group asserts. "The Constitution in Crisis," a recent report issued by Representative John Conyers, lists the specific laws and Constitutional provisions that have been violated, along with relevant evidence. Conyers told reporters that he held hearings because he did not want anyone to be able to say, "we did not know" that the current administration was dismantling the Constitution. The evidence is everywhere, he stated.

The Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney is just beginning to get organized. They meet on Mondays from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Thurston County Courthouse, Building 2, Room 230. If you are interested in more information about their actions or obtaining a petition, contacting them at: impeachbush@riseup.net .

Attend a showing of *How to Impeach a President* at Traditions on Tuesday, September 19 at 7pm. Facilitated discussion will follow. (Announcement on pg. 2)

Successes and setbacks in felony enfranchisement

No money for lawyers and debts, then no vote for you

by Marco Rosaire Rossi

There is an old anarchist saying: "if voting ever changed anything they would make it illegal." Well, they have, or rather it has been. Ever since the end of the Civil War, when slavery took on a more judicial rather than economic form, there have been barriers to prevent prisoners from participating in the political process. Many states have tough regulations preventing ex-prisoners from exercising their right to vote, and only two states – Maine and Vermont – allow people to vote while incarcerated. With a constantly increasing prison population, this mass disenfranchisement of current and ex-prisoners has had a profound effect on the American electoral system. Currently, there are over six million eligible voters barred from voting due to past or current incarceration records. Notably, the African-American community has been hit extremely hard. As much as 13% of black males out of prison are being denied their right to vote because of a felony record.

> There are over 250,000 ex-prisoners in Washington state who are denied the right to vote due to felony convictions.

Unfortunately, Washington state is no exception to this rule. There are over 250,000 ex-prisoners in Washington who are denied the right to vote due to felony convictions. The issue of felony disenfranchisement was a major controversy in the extremely close election between Governor Christine Gregoire and Dino Rossi. Republicans went to great lengths to try to convince the courts that they should exclude the role of ex-prisoners in the election.

There is some good news. People are fighting back – and winning! In March of this year, King County Superior Court Judge Michael Spearman struck down a Washington law that prohibited ex-prisoners with felony convictions from voting because they haven't paid court-imposed debts. In his ruling, Judge Spearman wrote, "It is well recognized that there is simply no rational relationship between the ability to pay (debts) and the exercise of constitutional rights."

The American Civil Liberties Union, who brought the case before the King County Superior Court, referred to the ruling as a landmark decision. According to Kathleen Taylor, the executive director of ACLU-WA, the Washington law was a modern "poll tax" which disproportionately targeted minority groups – especially African-Americans. "The right to vote is one our most fundamental rights in a democracy... (Washington) state should not impose economics to voting," Taylor said.

The success on the judicial front was overshadowed by a minor setback in legislation. Three bills were introduced which would have automatically restored voting rights to all prisoners upon release and would have created a special committee to study felon disenfranchisement. Unfortunately, none of the bills managed to muster enough support to pass, but the issue is not necessarily dead either. It is likely that similar bills will make their way back through legislation in the near future.

Voting in formal elections is currently the most marginal and token way of practicing democracy in our political system. Nevertheless, the demise of our electoral system and the exclusion of prisoner/ex-prisoner rights are illustrative of America's gradual slip toward fascism. Enfranchisement for prisoners and former prisoners are important goals for protecting and expanding what glimmer of democracy still exists.

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Letter to the Editor, *The Olympian*, 8/24/06

Election laws in need of an overhaul

I wish to apologize to the 1,233 people who believed either in democracy, ending the war in Iraq, impeaching Bush and Cheney, balancing the budget, or universal health care who signed my petition to get on the ballot as an independent candidate for Congress in the third Congressional District, and to my volunteers for my failure to get on the ballot.

It has been difficult to write this letter because I tried very hard to follow the incomplete, inaccurate and obfuscatory instructions provided by the Secretary of State for filing for office. It has been difficult for me to understand how the Secretary of State can claim that Washington promotes democracy while preventing candidates from appearing on the ballot.

It has been difficult for me to understand why the state Supreme Court would rather uphold their rules of court instead of the United States Constitution.

It has been difficult for me to understand why the Attorney General's office apparently believes that it is not a violation of the First Amendment to have discriminatory election laws, or that (presumably) a statutory week is six days.

I want to blame them, but ultimately the blame rests with me.

Two petition signers, Rep. Brendan Williams and Sam Hunt, have agreed to create election laws that actually promote democracy and are fair to all, and I look forward to working with them.

Write in my name to end the war in Iraq.

Jed Whittaker, Olympia

WRITE IN
Jed Whittaker for Congress

End the War

VALUES

1 The difference between right and wrong.

Jed wants to end the war in Iraq because killing people is wrong.
Congressman Brian Baird voted against the war in Iraq, but continues to vote to fund it. When something is wrong, it continues to be wrong. When parents teach their children the difference between right and wrong, they try to be consistent. What does Congressman Brian Baird think?

2 Respect for the law.

Jed wants to impeach George W. Bush and Dick Cheney because they are violating the United States Constitution and have no respect for the law. Congressman Brian Baird is silent about Bush and Cheney's violations of the law. When parents teach their children respect for the law, they know that the best teaching is to respect the law themselves, to teach by example. What example is Congressman Brian Baird teaching?

3 Do not spend money you do not have.

Jed wants to balance the federal budget.
Congress is spending like a bunch of drunken sailors, and is saddling the children and their children with the bill. Congressman Brian Baird is ineffective in balancing the budget. Farmers know that we should not be eating the seed corn, why doesn't the Republican Congress? Parents know they must save money to pay for future bills, why doesn't the Republican Congress?

4 Intelligent Compassion.

Jed wants Universal (free) Health Care for all Americans. A healthy people are happier, and more productive. Congressman Brian Baird is ineffective in achieving Universal Health Care. Parents know that if babies are healthy, then they will have fewer health problems as they grow up.

5 We share the earth we walk on. Earth is our home.

Jed agrees with Al Gore that there is a solution to global warming, but that there is a lack of political will to achieve it. Congressman Brian Baird probably thinks so too. Parents teach their children to share.
www.climatecrisis.com

Biography

- Alaska resident 40 years
- Washington resident 4 years
- Graduate of Evergreen State College
- Proud member of the Laborer's Union Local 252
- Commercial fisherman
- Small business owner
- President of EARTH, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation 1990-93
- Political Activist
- Member Olympia Film Society
- Member Washington Tilth Producers (organic farmers)
- Public Interest Litigant
- 48 years old

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Jed Whittaker

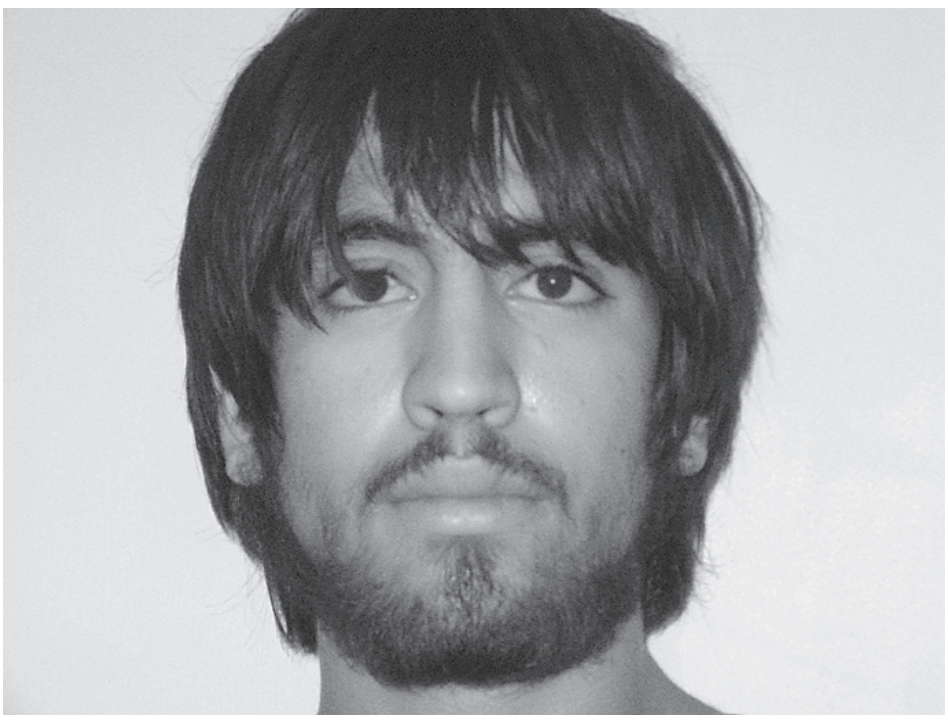
Standing up to foreign aggression and domestic repression

NO COMPROMISE ON JUSTICE

by Mat Slobodkin

Of the "Olympia 22" I was probably least involved in the protests in terms of organization and planning. I had heard of the port resistance movement as many of my close friends were among the organizers and were continually being arrested the week before the 30th of May, the day on which I was arrested. I am a bit ashamed to say that I was unwilling to join earlier due to my reluctance to become involved in anything that might interfere with my final weeks of studies. On May 30th I heard about a rally at the port and decided to go.

It is wrong to back away in fear if the struggle is as right and as urgent as an act against an illegal and immoral occupation. I have not regretted for one moment the actions I took on that day. To give in to such a brutal show of force would encourage the police and the ports to use these tactics again. In being there on that day, the Olympia 22 have forced the police and the port to carry their illogically vicious policies to resolution, and only in this will their actions be met with true consequences. If none of us had gone to jail, the police would not have to defend their actions, and everyone would have forgotten.



This photo of Mat was taken by his sister, Liaht Slobodkin.

> To give in to such a brutal show of force would encourage the police and the ports to use these tactics again.

I find myself in a position to compromise (plea bargain) and save myself from spending more money and time going to trial, not to mention the even higher possible cost of a conviction. In doing so, I would show the police that their tactics work, and even worse, discourage further protesters from taking the stand the Olympia 22 took that day. I cannot.

One thing I want to emphasize is that I was not arrested for my actions on that day. I was arrested for riot. The Washington State Penal Code defines riot quite clearly.

RCW 9A.84.010
Riot.

(1) *A person is guilty of the crime of riot if, acting with three or more other persons, he or she knowingly and unlawfully uses or threatens to use force, or in any way participates in the use of such force, against any other person or against property.*

This is a crime that I never committed.

I feel that these charges against us, and in particular the blatantly false charges of riot against Daniel and I, are attempts to suppress future resistance and speech against not only the war, but future, perhaps unforeseen, issues. While the war is obviously the urgent subject, the tactics used by police, and so far condoned by the courts, challenge the ability of future generations to speak up against illegal acts by our government. In my eyes, this repression is the most dangerous threat to our freedom and our political power as a people. If allowed to stand, the acts at the port of Olympia by the police would rob us not only of our own voices, but rob future generations of their voices as well.

▸ **Port** continued from page 1

propriately rerouting and escorting the convoy through local access roads and arresting pedestrians. None of those cited and arrested have been charged with that crime from the city prosecutor's office. If the prosecutor believes that the police acted in bad faith, in a biased manner or illegally, they often do not pursue charges against the arrested and hope to let the issue go away. The police know this too – that it is not always about getting the criminal – but they still take particular actions to achieve a short-term political goal. In this case, they clearly decided that one group's interests were more important than another's and removed any barriers to that favored interest. It has also come to light that the OPD made the decision to destroy their May 30 port videos, which may have been an illegal act.

> In essence, the prosecutor is petitioning the court to not allow the protester/defendants to utter such words as "war," "Iraq," or "demonstration," in the context of this charge which stems from a demonstration against the illegal war in Iraq.

One activist during this time, Drew Hendricks, was arrested and originally prosecuted by the county with a felony trespassing charge. How exactly does a citizen trespass on public property, like the Port? How is a constitutionally-protected demonstration against a government agency, like the Port, considered criminal? When the prosecution could not make the case stick before a judge, it was dropped to a misdemeanor charge which will eventually be dismissed with a one-year deferred sentence. Hendricks also had to pay a fine of $43 for court costs as part of the plea bargain he accepted.

The next week, with the imminent arrival of the USNS Pomeroy, hundreds of community activists took the protest to the Port gates. There they were confronted by many jurisdictions of police who used disproportionately violent responses (pepper spray, unnecessary and excessive force, withholding of medical care, and mass arrests) against the non-violent protesters. Demonstrators also held a teach-in led by International Politics and Middle East Professor, Steve Niva, had a public party, and staged a die-in as the USNS Pomeroy left the port on May31.

The police used flawed and slanted political logic by demanding that demonstrators remove a base-camp from a parking lot because "it would attract homelessness." Don't they understand that by allowing and escorting the convoy to the port and setting up a massive police camp, they sent out open invitations for demonstrations there? The police got what they asked for on both counts.

On May 30, twenty people were arrested at the Port of Olympia for "criminal trespassing" – the same reduced charge that Hendricks got. Two were arrested for "riot," which by state law requires three or more people to be involved. As the county prosecutor pursues the riot charges, it will be a telling commentary on our judicial system if they can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that 1 +1 = 3. Again, it just illustrates that the prosecution is left to clean up the mess that sloppy [political] policing gives them. We should remember that the Prosecution is willingly complicit in that farce – they could simply drop the charges.

The Port of Olympia is also applying political pressure on the county prosecutor's office to extort $29,000 from the protesters. In a letter their attorney sent to the prosecutor, they state: "Please know that the Port of Olympia seeks restitution in order to be made whole from the damages caused by the defendants name[d]... and which resulted in your agency filing the above criminal charges."

Don't they know that none of the protesters are charged for the alleged damages cited? No one has been charged with

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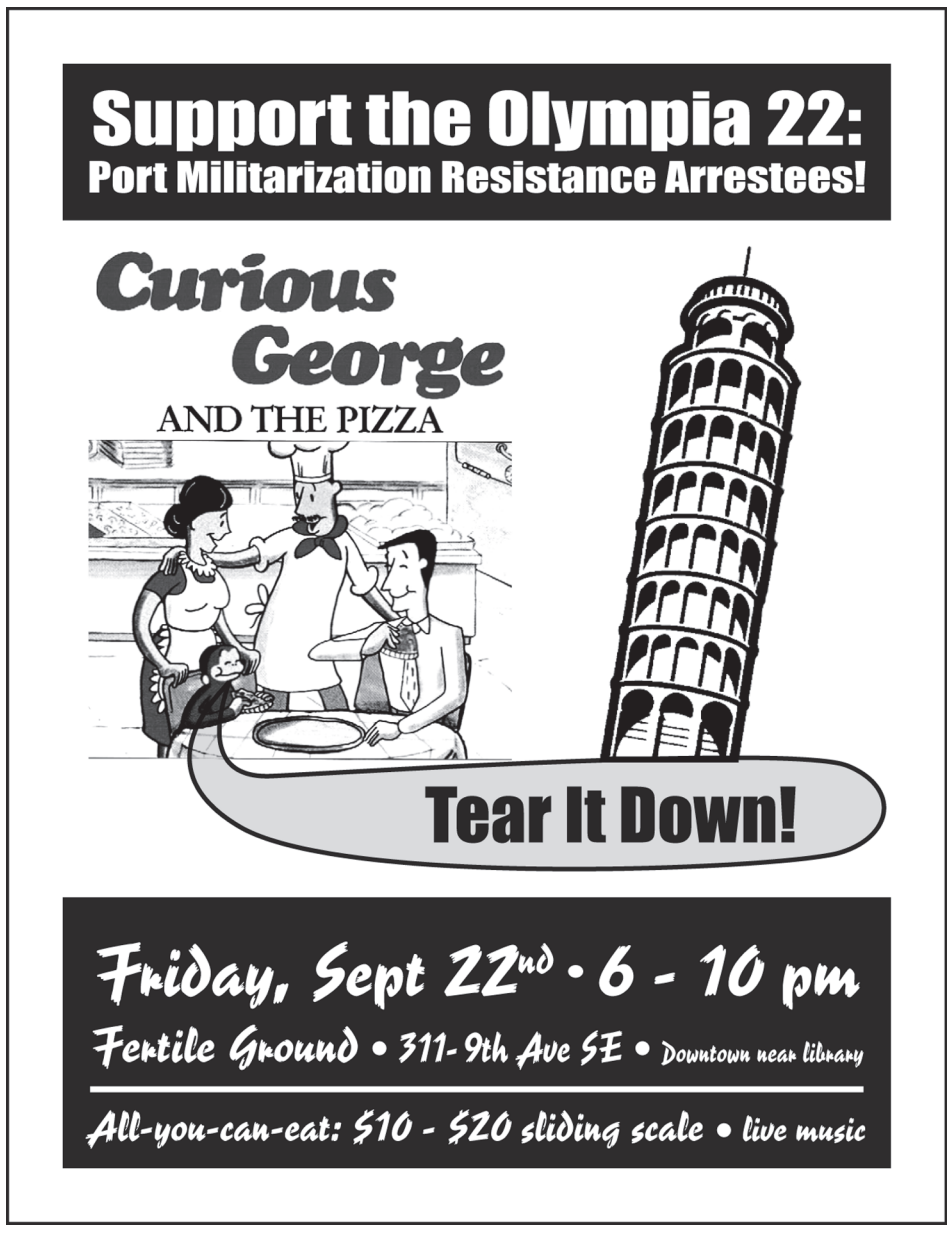
May 30: Police at the Port of Olympia wore heavy armor to defend themselves from the threat of nonviolence. Photo by David Loren


Support the Olympia 22:
Port Militarization Resistance Arrestees!
Curious George
AND THE PIZZA
Tear It Down!
Friday, Sept 22nd • 6 - 10 pm
Fertile Ground • 311- 9th Ave SE • Downtown near library
All-you-can-eat: $10 - $20 sliding scale • live music

▸ **Port** continued from previous page

destruction of property nor did any of those charged ask for the police to set up their camp on overtime pay. None of the protesters, by the way, got paid – regular time or overtime. In a parallel occurrence, eleven nazis recently came to town and the police established a one-day 275-officer presence and about a half-mile of rented chain link fence. Why aren't the nazis being asked for restitution for this $50,000 expense? Can you say "political choice?"

Nevertheless, the scrambling prosecutor is using the restitution issue, in addition to threatened jail time, to intimidate the protesters into accepting a plea bargain. Often in district court, a jury decides guilt or innocence and the judge imposes the sentence and/or fines. The prosecutor at one pre-trial hearing informed the protesters of a deal that she said she mailed the day before (she didn't). All but one have rejected a "deal" that is consistent with Hendricks', except with the additional stipulation of paying $200 restitution each for the port gate.

Most of the protesters are represented by an attorney or public defender, but five are representing themselves and were ready for their trials to begin August 28. The prosecution, faced with having to prosecute all before their 90-day speedy trial right expired, forced a continuance on the judge by presenting an absurd motion to ban political speech during the trials mere days before they were to begin. Again she said she mailed it to the protesters the day before (and again, she didn't), but this time she produced enough copies on the spot for them, blurting out to the judge's procedural frustration that the war has "nothing to do with it." In essence, the prosecutor is petitioning the court to not allow the protester/defendants to utter such words as "war," "Iraq," or "demonstration," in the context of this charge which stems from a demonstration against the illegal war in Iraq. It is unlikely that the judge would impose this limitation on free speech and equitable arguments, but she did grant a procedural continuance for a full hearing on the matter. So for now the prosecution has bought some more time for themselves as the trials were moved back to October 9. Maybe they can take this time and focus on finding exactly what crime was committed since nothing they've done so far seems to make sense.

The Port of Olympia Legal Defense Fund was established to help offset the costs associated with these cases, including potentially suing the police and/or the port for their behavior. You can donate to the fund via PayPal at www.paypal.com to the following address: olyport.ldf@gmail.com or mail a check to: Port of Olympia Legal Defense Fund, PO Box 295 Olympia, Washington 98507-0295. If you donate more than $25, you'll receive a button with an image like the one printed below.

Until they stock Plan B

The boycott against Ralph's and Bayview continues

by Janet Blanding

The FDA broadened access to Plan B for many women with its decision to allow over-the-counter acquisition by women 18 years and over. If Plan B were now available in gas stations and 7/11s, access would no longer be an issue and continuing to boycott would be more a matter of ideology than practicality. However, Plan B will not be as broadly available as Advil or Alka-Seltzer; although a prescription is no longer required, it will be available only in pharmacies, and it will still be kept behind the counter. Women will have to present ID proving they are 18 or over before they will be allowed to purchase it. Because access is limited to pharmacies, a store's policy to stock or not to stock Plan B is still critical to emergency contraception's availability to women. The women who use Ralph's Thriftway pharmacy continue to be underserved by Ralph's. Therefore, the boycott of Ralph's and Bayview will continue until the pharmacy stocks Plan B.

Organizers are hopeful that Ralph's emergency contraception policy will change soon. Kevin Stormans has admitted publicly to the Olympian and privately to others that the boycott has impacted his business significantly. Now, in addition to the financial sanctions imposed by the community, the Pharmacy Board is investigating the legality of his decision not to stock. The nine women who filed complaints against Ralph's for not filling their legal prescriptions for Plan B recently received letters from the Department of Health, telling them that the Pharmacy Board felt that investigations were warranted and would be commencing soon. In addition, the Pharmacy Board is redrafting state code regarding a pharmacist's responsibility to fill prescriptions. Although the public will not see the revised code until the Pharmacy Board hearing of August 31, it is widely rumored that due to pressure from both the public and the governor, the board is likely to create a policy that will protect a pharmacy consumer's right to have his or her prescription filled promptly at any pharmacy. It will be interesting to see how Pharmacy Board actions affect Stormans' policy. It seems unlikely that Ralph's will continue to refuse to stock the morning after pill for moral reasons if such a policy is judged to be unlawful.

For updates, check out www.planboly.org .

The sick puppy ate my media standards

by Jeff Cohen

John Mark Karr is one sick puppy – a school teacher who fantasized that he'd engaged in consensual sex so passionately with six-year-old JonBenet Ramsey that he accidentally killed her. And television news in our country is one ravenous beast – abandoning any notion of journalism, proportion or decency to again prey upon JonBenet's corpse for ratings and profit.

God only knows what combination of hurt and mental illness went into producing the sick puppy. On the other hand, there's no mystery about what created the media beast: corrupt government policies combined with corporate greed. Make no mistake: The media beast is every bit as compulsive and out of control as Karr, who may yet end up behind bars for child pornography. But the beast is free to maul again and again.

For 10 days, TV news has fixated on this imposter-culprit as if he were a world-historical figure – like Nelson Mandela emerging from prison, only bigger. TV tracked Karr's travels across the globe, telling us what he ate for dinner, analyzing his attire.

To extend Karr's allotted 15-minutes of fame into a 10-day ordeal, TV news ignored important stories of war, environmental degradation, corruption, citizen activism. Instead, TV viewers were offered hundreds of hours of single-minded examination and debate on one burning question: did Karr do it? The inquiry was relentless and aired all sides.

If only we'd had such in-depth, full-spectrum debate when the Bush team was dragging our country into war based on pretense. I worked in cable news just prior to the Iraq war. As I describe in my book Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media, journalists at MSNBC got into trouble with management for questioning Team Bush too strongly, for insisting on genuine debate.

By contrast, no one will get into trouble for this embarrassing 10-day spasm of overwrought Karr coverage. . .as long as ratings were good and coverage was cheap. If so, news producers can expect congratulations for a job well done.

Tabloid stories involving sex, crime or celebrity are preferred by TV news management today. These stories are inexpensive to cover, since speculation by alleged experts can fill fill up hours of airtime. And tabloid stories typically don't offend anyone in political or economic power, including corporate sponsors and media owners.

But aggressively covering an administration bent on war can cause all sorts of problems. Especially for a media conglomerate that has business pending before the Federal Communications Commission. Especially when that media titan is lobbying the FCC to allow it to grow even more titanic – as was happening in 2003 exactly at the time the Bush White House was launching its invasion of Iraq.

During the run-up to war, I was a senior producer on Phil Donahue's primetime MSNBC show, the most watched program on the channel, until it was terminated three weeks before the war began. An internal NBC memo soon leaked out, complaining that Donahue was "a difficult public face for NBC in a time of war. . .He seems to delight in presenting guests who are antiwar, anti-Bush and skeptical of the administration's motives."

Stick to tabloid stories and your TV career will flourish. Be skeptical about officialdom's war motives and they'll show you the door.

I'll never forget my first day of work at MSNBC headquarters in the spring of 2002. As I entered the building's central corridor, I saw a number of framed posters celebrating highpoints of the channel's early history. The first one: "The Funeral of Princess Diana." Then: "Death of JFK, Jr." On the opposite wall, I saw "Columbine Shootings, Live Coverage" and "The Concorde Crash." I remember thinking: If these are what MSNBC considers its highlights, what were its lowlights?

TV news owners and management love stories that keep viewers passive, on the sidelines – as spectators. They fear the ones that might motivate us to take action, on the field – as citizens.

Active, informed citizens seek out (and build) independent media. They're the kind of pesky activists who intervene in FCC decisions and fight to diversify a mainstream media system that's been surrendered corruptly to a half-dozen conglomerates.

TV news is trying desperately to hold onto its audience of passive consumers: those who know everything about John Mark Karr's dinner of pate and chardonnay, and next to nothing about the court ruling that Bush's warrantless wiretapping is unconstitutional.

Last night, with cable news anchors looking ridiculous over their 10-day JonBenet binge, one MSNBC host seemed to need a scapegoat. If not murder, she asked a legal expert, couldn't Karr at least be charged with "conspiracy to set off a media frenzy"?

You see, the 10-day hijacking of the airwaves was not her fault, or her bosses' fault. It was Karr's fault. . .TV's version of "the sick puppy ate my homework" excuse.

Jeff Cohen (jeffcohen.org) is the founder of the media watch group FAIR (www.fair.org), and author of the new book, Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

CONTENTS

1 Port Militarization Resistance goes to court

1 Swift Justice: sexual assault in the military

4 Local Muslims reach out

5 Lt. Watada challenges us to support resisters

6 Are we willing to confront Israel?

7 Change is coming to Mexico

8 Olympia activists to impeach Bush/Cheney

8 No money, no lawyer, no vote

9 Jed Whittaker: Censored

10 One of the Olympia 22 speaks out

11 Ralph's boycott continues till they stock Plan B

11 Who ate the media?

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